

RIVERSIDE EDUCATIONAL MONOGRAPHS

LANGUAGE TEACHING  
IN THE GRADES

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Educational  
Teaching

# Riverside Educational Monographs

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## LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE GRADES

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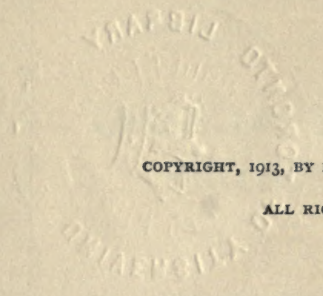


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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE common schools are becoming interested in literary expression for the first time. On first reading, such a statement seems absurdly untrue to the history of elementary instruction. Yet an analysis of our pedagogical development confirms the claim. It is true that the earliest activities of our older schools were exclusively associated with language and literature; and that for centuries the materials of education remained dominantly linguistic. Nevertheless the traditional school was not interested in literary expression, or anything closely approximating it. The study of language was formal rather than literary; it was devised to teach children to understand in an abstract way the formalities of spelling, grammar, and rhetoric, rather than to lead them into a sincere expression of their own lives through the medium of the art-forms of speech and written language.

Two and a half centuries of American schools did not rectify the narrowness and the false emphasis of our traditions in language teaching. To be sure there was, here and there, some tinkering with the course of study and methods of teach-

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ing ; but it was not a reform of the spirit of the schoolmaster, only a slight modification in his manners. It took a quarter-century of pedagogical rebellion to break the monopoly of formal-mindedness in language instruction. Now a few teachers at least have a sane theory of the relation of language and literature to life in school or out. Even among the rank and file it is no longer fashionable to speak of the language studies as formal subjects. They are vital rather than formal, because they are based on the child's own experiences and terminate in the expression and solution of his own problems. Reading, penmanship, spelling, grammar, and rhetoric are not regarded as disciplines pursuing independent ends. Their kinship is recognized through their common contribution to oral and written expression and to literature. Reading and literature have become one study, the function of which is to appreciate life beyond immediate sense contact. And spelling, grammar, and rhetoric have been reduced to the position of occasional aids to writing. Surely these changes are symptomatic of an altered conception of schoolteaching.

It is not at all strange that the oldest of the school subjects, language study, should be the last to catch the spirit of modern teaching. It has had more centuries of fixation to undo than manual training, nature study, and the graphic arts.

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Its sins were old enough to be antiques, and therefore likely to command that traditional reverence which prevents their correction through rational standards of criticism. But the time has come when the lateral influence of the newer school subjects, which emphasize self-expression in terms of use and beauty, is great enough to overcome the downward pressure of the tradition of formalism. It begins to be apparent to us that an understanding of language is given to children for the purpose of aiding expression, just as their knowledge of woods, tools, plants, and soils is intended as a guide to useful action in industry and agriculture. The expressive function of language teaching is its dominant one. To the extent that literature widens the horizons of human experience and gives it significant interpretation, it modifies the substance of the child's thought and feeling; to the extent that it suggests an effective and congenial manner of voicing the needs of life, it will give command over the forms of effective and winsome expression. Thus language study becomes, what it normally is with people out of school, a virile, broadening, and useful pursuit.

The difficulty with most teachers is that they cannot see how their newer ideals of language teaching are to be worked out in detailed methods. They are impatient enough with the scholastic

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ceremonial of parsing and other exercises which distract from literary understanding. In spite of themselves they suspect that rules of grammar only impede expression. Yet they do not know what new methods of teaching they ought to substitute for those familiar to them. In want of concrete aid, they follow the line of least resistance, which is tradition. We need to reconstruct more than the *philosophy* of language teaching; we must rebuild its *practice*. This volume, with its clear statement of theory and its wealth of practical suggestions, is offered as an aid to both ends.



# LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE GRADES

## I

### THE PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

#### *Language as communicated thought*

LANGUAGE is communicated thought. Clear, definite thought and its clear, direct expression are inseparable. To know the thoughts of another is to know his life.

The teaching of no other subject is so vitally wrapped up in the gospel of life as is the teaching of the so-called language group of studies (reading, language lessons, writing, spelling, dictation, oral and written composition, and, later, grammar and rhetoric). For this reason, cold, formal treatment of these studies is most deadening in its effect.

#### *Language as self-expression*

The speech of one who talks much and says little is but "as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal," though every word be correctly used and every sentence faultless in construction. Fluency and precision of speech may be gained at the ex-

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pense of language power. It clearly follows that instructing children in the use of language forms is not the vital part of language teaching. True language training is giving skill in self-expression: the expression of the individual's own experiences, — his own thoughts, his own feelings, his own way of looking at things; skill in expressing them in terms of simplicity, sincerity, and effectiveness. To teach language is to rouse, stimulate, and guide a twofold activity in the pupil: (1) thinking; (2) giving his thought to others.

### *Two requisite conditions*

Even the necessary practice exercises for mastery and skill are filled with the spirit of life when the pupil catches glimpses of their purpose and value. The first requisite is interest in what he is to say or write. This generates the second requisite, eagerness to tell something clearly and well.

To teach language is then: (1) to rouse and stimulate thought and feeling; (2) to give practice in the habit of thinking clearly and of expressing thought clearly. Ideals, self-activity, suggestion, imitation (unconscious and conscious), repetition, habit; there is no other path to the development of language power. No person, no group of persons, arbitrarily marked it out. It is rediscovered by each who studies

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conditions of growth in himself and in those about him.

### *The place of ideal wants*

The first condition is always interest in an ideal. The natural stimulus of every phase of human activity is the ideal that takes hold of the mind and heart; and the effectiveness of that activity in each individual depends upon the strength of his purpose and the degree of effort he puts forth; these in turn depend upon the vividness and potency of the stimulating idea. The word *ideal* means *idea* plus *desire to attain* — the prerequisites of all real attainment.

The child finds his first language ideals in the words he hears at home, on the street and playground, and, later, at school. The growth of his power to understand and use language measures his assimilation of the life about him. In other words, his language grows with himself, and he with it.

In the study of any art, response to truth and beauty must always precede and accompany successful efforts to attain truthful and beautiful expression. Teachers of music, of drawing, and of painting, build on this principle. Why should there be divorce of practice from ideals in this one great universal art of language? To be sure, there is no skill without repeated doing; but it

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is equally certain that the product of low ideals and weak thought is valueless, be it ever so perfect mechanically. One must constantly put forth his own efforts, but he must as constantly look to his ideals. George Eliot voiced what every human being feels when she said, — "For my part, people who do anything finely always inspire me to try. I don't mean that they make me believe that I can do it as well as they, but they make the things seem worthy to be done."

### *Two fundamental principles of art*

Whatever art is studied, two fundamental principles must be recognized: (1) that the subtle influence of vital contact with the best expressions of that art molds the student's efforts into finer quality and form; (2) that his own striving to express himself enables him to attain better appreciation of the work of the artist. Literature is the highest form of expression of the language arts; and the right use of the right literature is, therefore, the basis of all really effective and vital language teaching.



## II

### THE USE OF LITERATURE AS THE BASIS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

#### *Two standards for literary material used*

THE highest language ideals are found in literature, and since there is a wealth of literature that appeals to the child, to fail to make this a part of his growing life is to miss the greatest factor in his language development.

To serve its purpose, it must measure up to a twofold standard: (1) The thought and feeling embodied must add beauty, meaning, and so joy, to the everyday life of the child in his present stage of growth. (2) The form of the expression must have some element of beauty if only that of simplicity and directness.

#### *Its use to interpret the child's experience*

This use of literature is not as a setting of the copy. A necessary element of art is that it shall be an expression of the individual's own way of seeing, feeling, and doing ; and this means neither imitation nor reproduction. A great poem should never be paraphrased. A story in verse, not a poem, may be rewritten in prose form ; and a real

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poem or a bit of fine prose may be copied for various purposes related to vocabulary or standards of form ; but literature as the natural basis of language lessons serves a far greater end. It should suggest and recall, illumine and interpret, the child's own personal experiences, which he is later to tell in speech or in writing as expressing himself. He does, truly, "enjoy in his books a delightful dress-rehearsal of experience"; but it must not be forgotten that it is his own personal experience which is dressed for the rehearsal.

How the communicated thought of one mind kindles response in another and stirs the instinctive desire to express that response, remains one of the wonderful mysteries of life. But we accept this marvelous evidence of the kinship of humanity as the fundamental basis of all conversation, reading, writing, and all forms of personal expression. The power of suggestion by means of language is interwoven with every word and deed of daily life.

In accordance with this great truth, the literature that portrays in the life-story of another something the child has himself seen, thought, felt, or done, most vividly recalls and suggests his own experiences. And the vivid mental picture generates the desire to tell about it.

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### *Its influence on vocabulary and phraseology*

But literature as the basis of language teaching will render another service. It will help the child to an enriched vocabulary and to finer phraseology. In its influence here, we find the same laws operating, viz. : ideals, suggestion, unconscious and conscious imitation. "That language is caught, not taught" is the old way of expressing this truth. The choice word and the happy phrase have a peculiar charm for the young, exerting their strongest influence during the period of greatest growth in language power. In youth, more often than in adult life, the form of expression heard or read "is caught" in the meshes of the brain and remains the form in which the thought is recalled. Many of these expressions are incorporated in conversation, and in original descriptions and stories, because of the child's instinctive response to sound and rhythm, and also because of his instinctive impulse to imitate and to repeat the words that most impressed him.

In addition to this growth in language power induced by unconscious imitation, the skillful teacher leads to conscious imitation of certain correct forms and fine or strong expressions ; and through repetition of these forms in self-expression, leads to their unconscious and habitual

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use. Professor Palmer says that a word three times used is thereafter a part of one's own vocabulary. In this way, and not under the spell of a rule of grammar, does each individual learn to use the English language correctly.

### *The essential characteristics of stories and poems used*

The range of literature used must be as wide as the interests of the child. It must include a series of stories and poems that appeal to the many sides of his life,—the full round of his activities,—his plays, loves, admirations, aspirations, griefs, and joys. It must portray the two worlds he inhabits, his make-believe world, and the world about him.

Each poem studied should suggest and illumine a personal experience ; be a short whole or composed of short wholes ; it should contain rich imagery, —a series of word-pictures, vivid to the child ; it should boldly outline the central interest with few accessories. The meaning of the whole should be easily interpreted by the experience of the child. And, in a poem, there is always the music of sound and rhythm.

The story requisites are similar. Each should be simple in plot ; the events narrated should find response in the experience of the child or in his "high imaginings" ; the characters, few in



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number, with one prominent figure about whom the interest centers, — one worthy of idealization. The story should be a short whole or composed of short wholes ; be worthy of reproduction in some form. It should be told with simplicity, clearness, directness, unity, coherence, and strong climax brought to a quick close. There should not be at the end a formal statement of its meaning.

### *The need of a large conception of language teaching*

The literature wisely selected, the teacher's next problem is how to use it with children, that it may serve its high ends, as manifested in practical results.

The first essential of success in teaching English is a large conception in the teacher's mind of the value and significance of the work. If he conceives it to be merely instruction in the use of language forms, the result will inevitably bear the stamp of the mechanical. If, on the other hand, his conscious purpose is to enlarge and deepen the thought and feeling to be expressed, and at the same time to develop technical accuracy, skill, and worthier form, the result will be vital.

And this large conception must be in the heart as well as in the mind of the teacher. Scientific observation has proved that all mental growth

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beyond a certain rudimentary stage depends absolutely on self-expression — on finding fit utterance for the vague thought or feeling that cannot take shape or body until it comes to birth in language. But it is possible to know the recorded scientific fact without realizing its importance or bearing. Only when the feeling which accompanies such realization is woven into the fiber of this intellectual knowledge is its dynamic force felt in language teaching. The story of Helen Keller's life impresses the feeling of the value of open avenues of expression, more forcibly than can any statement of scientist or philosopher. Her life is itself a book in which God has so written this great truth that it makes powerful appeal to the heart of the reader as well as to his intellect.

Again, the conception of the teacher's part in this development of language power will determine the character of the teaching. We pour new life-currents into our work when we not merely know as a fact, but assimilate as a truth the thought of Carlyle: "How can an inanimate, mechanical gerund-grinder foster the growth of anything ; much more of mind, which grows not like the vegetable (by having its roots littered by etymological compost), but like a Spirit, — by mysterious contact of Spirit." Helen Keller, with the marvelous language power that charac-

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terizes her to-day, is a concrete illustration of this message. Miss Sullivan, the rare teacher of this rare soul, says : "Helen learned language by being brought in contact with living language itself, brought for the purpose of furnishing themes of thought and of filling her mind with beautiful pictures and inspiring ideals." She adds : "I have always observed that children invariably delight in lofty, poetic language, which we are too ready to think beyond their comprehension."

### *The selection and use of ideals found in literature*

How will these large conceptions of language and language teaching in the mind of the teacher be manifested in his work? First of all, in the selection, presentation, and further use of the ideals found in literature.

Of himself, by his own observing, imaging, and thinking, the child learns many things about the world in which he lives ; he vaguely feels many of the truths of life ; he is even able to tell others much of what he sees. But in literature he finds the thought of those who have seen more, felt more deeply, and expressed themselves more effectively. Here he finds not only inspiration, but also models of form.

Words have a marvelous power over the mind, and especially over the young mind ; it is pe-

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cularly susceptible to suggestion. It is often said that "the child thinks by means of images." Words cause living pictures to glow on the sensitive film of his brain. But no two children respond to the same words with the same mental pictures; not a child paints the exact picture in the mind of the speaker or writer. The result for each individual is a series of pictures with familiar setting, suggested and colored by the word-picture of another.

"A Random Memory" of Robert Louis Stevenson's forcibly illustrates the child's habit of weaving the web of a poem or a story into his own life:—

"Rummaging in the dusty pigeonholes of memory, I came once upon a graphic version of the famous psalm 'The Lord is my Shepherd'; and from the places employed in its illustration, which are all in the neighborhood of the house then occupied by my father, I am able to date it before the seventh year of my age. The 'pastures green' were represented by a certain suburban stubble field where I had once walked with my nurse under an autumnal sunset. . . . Here, in the fleecy person of the sheep, I seemed myself to follow something unseen, unrealized, and yet benignant; and close by the sheep in which I was incarnated—as if for greater security—rustled the skirts of my nurse. 'Death's



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dark vale' was a certain archway in the Warriston cemetery. . . . Here I beheld myself some paces ahead (seeing myself, I mean, from behind) utterly alone in that uncanny passage ; on the one side of me a rude, knobby shepherd's staff, on the other a rod like a billiard cue, appeared to accompany my progress ; the staff sturdily upright, the billiard cue inclined confidentially, like one whispering, toward my ear. I was aware — I will never tell you how — that the presence of these articles afforded me encouragement. . . . In this string of pictures I believe the gist of the psalm to have consisted ; I believe it had no more to say to me ; and the result was consolatory. I would go to sleep dwelling with restfulness upon these images. . . . I had already singled out one lovely verse — a scarce conscious joy in childhood, in age a companion thought : —

In pastures green Thou leadest me  
The quiet waters by."

The man who thus exquisitely repainted these pictures stored away in the "dusty pigeonholes of his memory," had three great gifts : vivid memories of childhood experiences, the heart of a child to interpret them, and the creative ability to bring them forth. He thus lays bare many universal feelings of childhood as he reads the emotions in his own soul.

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One of these feelings, — the quick response to the music and rhythm of words, — Stevenson recalls as follows : “ ‘The Lord is gone up with a shout, and God with the sound of a trumpet,’ rings still in my ears from my first childhood, and, perhaps, with something of my nurse’s accent. There was possibly some sort of image written in my mind by these loud words, but I believe the words themselves were what I cherished. I must have been taught the love of beautiful sounds before I was breeched.” The little girl who told of her love for “the singing sounds of the verses” in Longfellow’s “Psalm of Life” and Wordsworth’s “Daffodils” said the same thing in another way. Both spoke for *the* child, as well as for *a* child.

### *Some grievous sins committed against children*

These memories of Stevenson’s also suggest the grievous sins that have been committed against children, and, we might add, against literature. The so-called literature, rewritten, “written down” to the assumed mental level of the child, shows misunderstanding of the essential qualities of great literature and of the minds of children. The truth is that it is only the master mind that is great enough to teach the child heart. For real literature expresses the soul of the writer ; and that soul is greatest which

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has "become as a child." This is not saying that all great literature is suitable nourishment for the young mind ; it is saying that all suitable literature for the young mind is great literature. It is the range, not the quality, of thought and emotion that is limited by experience.

The literature that touches the heart of the child appeals to his imagination and stirs his emotions by suggesting and reviving his own experiences ; it appeals to his love of action. It must touch his loves, his hates, his aspirations, his fears, his joys, his griefs. It must penetrate his world of make-believe, and touch the everyday objects of the everyday world with the wand of fancy, — playing with their similarities and resemblances, — personifying sticks and stones, sun, moon, and stars, and even the phenomena and forces of nature. If things do not "come alive" in the outer world, they must be made alive in the inner world ; must "move about and do things." The richer the imagery, the more vivid the word painting, the greater his delight. Surely these are characteristics of great literature ; of great poets and prose writers.

Such names as Homer and Shakespeare suggest to many people a field of literature into which the young may not, cannot, enter. This belief is quite analogous to that of the child of the city slums, who "always thought grass was

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something to keep off of." Both misconceptions are pathetic. The children themselves, regardless of the false theories of their elders, have shown that Homer touches their heart-strings as does no modern writer of "stories and verses for the young." Hugh Miller, the man, writing of Hugh Miller, the boy under ten years of age, says : —

"Old Homer wrote admirably for little folk, especially in the *Odyssey*; a copy of which, . . . in Pope's translation, I found in the house of a neighbor. Next came the *Iliad* . . . . With what power and at how early an age, genius impresses! I saw, even at this immature period, that no other writer could cast a javelin with half the force of Homer."

To-day, in many primary schools, we find children entranced and their own lives lifted above the commonplace by the stories of the old Greek heroes; and in many a grammar school parts of translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are read with keenest zest.

The child, by no means ready for a play of Shakespeare's, listens with delight to such a burst of song as

"Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,  
And Phœbus 'gins arise,  
His steeds to water at those springs  
On chaliced flowers that lies;



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And winking Mary-buds begin  
To ope their golden eyes :  
With everything that pretty bin,  
My lady sweet, arise :  
Arise, arise."

Must he wait until he can fully understand the significance of "chaliced" before he can see Phœbus arise to water his steeds? see the "winking Mary-buds" "ope their golden eyes"? Must he be deprived of the pictures and the music because we do not nowadays say, "that pretty bin"?

Many another old English poet gives us gems of real child literature. Edmund Spenser may be quoted as an example. We find in his verse music, vivid word-painting, color, rich imagery, personification, action, and the simplicity resulting from living close to nature in loving intimacy. "We wander at will amidst this endless variety of incident, of figures, all steeped in the colors of the imagination, without being reminded that there are bounds to the world we have entered," writes one who knows this poet well. True, the "Faërie Queene" as a whole is not for the grades; but what of such extracts from it as the one given below? This particular quotation is given because it has been so often happily used in the intermediate grades, with children from homes of all degrees of culture and from homes barren of all culture.

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"Then came the Autumn all in yellow clad,  
As though he joyèd in his plenteous store,  
Laden with fruits that made him laugh, full glad  
That he had banished hunger . . .

. . . . .  
Upon his head a wreath, that was enrolled  
With ears of corn of every sort, he bore;  
And in his hand a sickle he did hold,  
To reap the ripening fruits the earth had yold."

One might write, "In autumn the earth looks yellow. It has brought forth ripened fruit and grain, and now we gather the harvest to keep us from getting hungry in the winter." There would be no unfamiliar word, and the child would surely get the facts. But would we exchange the poet's beautiful word picture for this literal statement? Both preserve the same familiar characteristics of autumn,—the ripened fruits, the vivid yellow coloring, the harvest;—but the poet embodies them in a personified autumn, such as the child loves to picture; and he feels the spirit of the season as a child feels it.

Does anyone believe that a child cannot image Spenser's Autumn and share his joyous spirit, because the words "clad," "laden," "enrolled," and "yold" are not in the everyday vocabulary? The boy, Robert Louis Stevenson, knew nothing of the theology of the Twenty-third Psalm, nor did he comprehend the exact meaning of many of its words. But "the result was consolatory";

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he went to sleep "dwelling with restfulness upon these images." The "scarce conscious joy of childhood" was a "companion thought of age." Does not many an adult who can explain the meanings of all the words, at least to his own satisfaction, possess less of the real meaning and spirit of the psalm?

### *The oral uses of literature*

Literature, as a basis of language training, has many uses besides the inspirational: it is a means of cultivating the ear; of enriching the vocabulary; of developing the feeling for a choice word, an apt phrase, and a well-constructed sentence. To attempt to limit the selections to the familiar vocabulary or the commonplace expressions would violate the principles of literature, of teaching, and of the nature of children. Even a certain quaintness of diction has a charm. For example, boys and girls of the intermediate grades delight in hearing selections from Lanier's "Malory's King Arthur" if the teacher reads them well. Such selections interpreted by a good reader add much to the ear training so essential to appreciation and good use of English.

It may be well to emphasize here the importance of this special phase of language teaching. Much beautiful literature should come to the pupil through the ear. The words of many a

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poem should so sing themselves through the ear into the brain of the child that he shall hear in his heart both message and music "long after they are heard no more" by the outer ear. And so the teacher's reading of literature is necessarily an important factor of every phase of language teaching, including the teaching of oral reading. That it may be the best literature for the pupils at that time, it should be selected by one who has the wide knowledge of literature that is born of years of familiarity, and who has the sympathy with children that means loving insight. That it may make its deepest impression, the reader should fully appreciate its meaning and beauty, and be able by his sympathetic reading to interpret that meaning and beauty to others.

The following sketch of one teacher's happy and profitable use of "Snow-Bound" illustrates the points that have been made. It is typical of a set of more than a hundred such reports sent to the writer by as many teachers in third and fourth grades. This one came from a school where most of the pupils are the children of laboring men, many of them foreigners. The teacher wrote:—

"I found the following to be the most successful plan of studying 'small wholes' from 'Snow-Bound': a short preparatory talk, then my read-



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ing the selection without comment, followed by general discussion with free questions ; then re-reading, the oftener the better. Sometimes the children listened silently and drew the pictures. Lastly, they chose the lines they liked best and wanted to learn, and in that way we committed sixty lines. Here are a few of their comments : 'I like it because we used to live on a farm.' 'I like it because I haven't lived on a farm, and I'd like to.' 'I like " Snow-Bound " because it seems so much like home and when we have storms.' 'I like where the old folks told them stories about when they were children.' 'Where the mother was praying that no one should want for warmth and food.' 'The part where they were doing things and the mother was knitting and they were telling stories.' 'After the storm was over, where the boys went out and cut through the drifts to get to the barn.' 'Where the animals were mad because their breakfast was so long in coming to them.' One boy said, 'Seems as if I can't keep from saying " Snow-Bound " all the time ' "

Like Stevenson, these children used the reader's pictures to bring their own to light ; and then it became a pleasure to tell of their own home circle, their own home experiences, and of experiences they would like to have, and to memorize the beautiful, vivid pictures of the poet. They had something to say and were eager to

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say it, — the first two requisites of effective oral and written composition.

Up to this point we have discussed only one manifestation of the large conception of the significance of language teaching, namely, the appreciation of the value of literature as a basis. Let us briefly consider a few other results.

### *Respect for individuality*

There will be respect for the individuality of the pupil. Though the teacher will kindle with the live coal and, later, trim the flame, he will keep his hands off and his tongue tied while each pupil tells of his own seeing, imaging, thinking, and feeling.

### *The importance of interest*

There will be interest on the part of the pupil. Lack of interest in oral or written composition is a sign that the real boy or girl has not been touched. Any form of activity that expresses one's self is accompanied by a sense of joy.

### *Recognition of unity in all language lessons*

There will be, also, recognition of the unity of the variously named lessons in the language group. In the schools of Germany the German language is studied as one subject, not cut up into sections. One finds on their schedules,—

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not literature, reading, rhetoric, language, spelling, — but German, which includes all these. It may not be a disadvantage to think of these recitations by their specific characters, but teacher and pupils should clearly recognize them all as only different phases of the study of English.

The reading lesson should be a reading of literature. It should furnish not only the inspiration, but a part of the material for the language lesson. The reading and language periods may well be considered as two halves of one whole. The personal thought and feeling stirred in the one should find opportunity for further expression in the other. While there can be no reading of literature without language training, there may well be a time known as the language period, so named because its specific purpose is *effective use* of language. By means of the reading lesson, completed by the language lesson, the child should not only grow in knowledge and appreciation of the best things written in English, but also in mastery of form and ability to speak and write more effectively. And the best forms of expression found in the reading lesson should be used as standards of comparison in the practice exercises.

The spelling lessons should include the writing from dictation of sentences, stanzas, and paragraphs. These should be models of form: they

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should be related in thought to the other lessons of the language group; they should be used to teach spelling, capitalization, and the character and use of punctuation marks,—in short, to teach “the mechanics of written language” and the correct spelling of words. These are never separated in use outside the schoolroom, and the habit should be formed of visualizing them in one picture. The lists of words, the sentences, the paragraphs, should all have direct bearing on both the thought and the form of the next oral or written composition.

There will necessarily be recitation periods devoted to class criticisms and corrections of dictation work and of oral and written composition. The standards must be the usage of good writers. There should be drawing and constructive lessons also, to illustrate and impress ideas that are suggested by the reading lesson and expressed in words in the language lesson.

Such unity of purpose and plan in the treatment of the several subjects of the language group is dictated by good pedagogy—another name for common sense.



### III

#### SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS IN THE USE OF LITERATURE FOR LANGUAGE TRAINING

##### *Reading the poem or story*

TELL (or read) the story, and recite (or read) the poem to the children so as to make it most effective in moving and molding self-expression. The well-told story will kindle stronger response than the story read aloud, though the latter has its value and should not be entirely neglected. The poem recited makes stronger appeal to the listener than the poem read to him. There is also value in training to reproduce what is read silently. But the teacher cannot too strongly emphasize the thought as first stated, viz: that the appeal to the ear is most effective in stimulating thought and feeling and in shaping its expression. To be a good reader, and to have his silent reading affect his own use of language, the pupil must be trained to hear the words he sees. To cultivate this habit, and the habit of "imagining" in response to words, and to cultivate the habit of assimilating the language of literature through its "ringing and singing in the ear," —

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these are essential elements in teaching reading and language.

### *Presenting it as a whole*

We have noted the value of short wholes. Give the story or the poem, first, as a whole, without interruption for question, comment, or explanation.

Give it as a whole, because only in its unity does it reveal its great central meaning and its beauty. Give it without comment, because each listener is entitled to the joy of discovery. One little fellow voiced what hundreds have felt when he said: "Please don't stop to explain. I see it all so plain until you stop to explain, and then I get all mixed up." The child is entitled first to his own personal interpretation of the meaning, no matter how crude and faulty. It is the great, vital, essential truth of the poem that we wish to impress. The pupil need see only the pictures vital to this meaning.

### *Asking preliminary questions*

Preface the story or poem by a very few pointed, significant questions,—each an individual problem to be solved. Each should demand the pupil's own individual response to the most significant word pictures, and his own individual interpretation and application of the meaning of

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the whole story or poem. Such questions stimulate alert attention, keen interest, vivid imagining, memory, interpretative power and desire to communicate to others what is seen, thought, and felt; e.g., the teacher may say something like this: "Each be ready to tell me when I finish reciting this poem: (1) what pictures you see most plainly; (2) what words or lines make you see them; (3) what pictures certain stanzas (or sentences) make you see (word pictures indicated by the teacher); (4) what parts you like best; (5) what the whole makes you think of." These questions may at first be given one at a time, — with discussion after each repeated presentation of the whole. The last question points to the central meaning, but leads to individual revelation and interpretation. When a number of fifth grade pupils said that Sidney Lanier's "The Song of the Chattahoochee" made them think of Longfellow's "Excelsior," it was the best possible evidence that they had grasped the great meaning of both poems.

### *Explaining comparisons and allusions*

If, in the poem to be given, there are comparisons or allusions unfamiliar to the children and vital to the meaning of the poem, prepare for these by story, pictures, or objects. But do not try to turn on all the side-lights. For example:

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children cannot enter into the spirit of Longfellow's "The Children's Hour," without familiarity with castles, — their turrets, dungeons, and round-towers; while understanding of the allusion to the Bishop of Bingen is not necessary.

Therefore, give the key to the interpretation of the poem in stories of life in the age of chivalry, when a man's castle was his fortress. By pictures, give needed knowledge of the parts of a castle; but make no conscious connection between these stories and the poem. Let the pupils use the key themselves.

Why make this preparation before giving the poem? Because the clearer and stronger the first impression, the more abiding. Figures of speech are used by the author to illuminate his message by referring to something supposed to be familiar to the reader. Whenever the thought of the hearer or reader is arrested and the interest weakened by an allusion meaningless to him, the literature loses a measure of its power. And the effect of explaining as one reads has already been noted.

### *Humanizing descriptive poems*

When it is necessary to warm and humanize a descriptive poem, preface it with accounts of personal experiences that include the seeing of what is described. It is the human element that arouses



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and deepens the interest in the picture. This element the teacher must often add from the pupil's experience to bring him into vital touch with the beauty and power of the description. For example, stories and descriptions of his own home help each better to appreciate Phœbe Cary's "Our Old Brown Homestead." And by sympathy with Whittier's "barefoot boy" through personal experience, the child may be led to great enjoyment of parts of this poem. Stories told by teacher and pupils of similar experiences in the woods and by the streams, with accounts of what was seen there, not only bring nearer the boy of the poem, but help all to see more clearly what he saw.

### *Providing abundant means for self-expression*

Having (1) prepared for the literature if necessary; having (2) given two or three stimulating questions to be discussed after the reading; having (3) presented the story or poem as a whole without interruption; then (4) provide abundant means for the pupil's assimilation of the poem by self-expression.

Encourage expression in various forms, viz.: drawing, painting, modeling, constructive exercises, conversation, oral and written reproduction of a story, dramatizing, recitation of a poem, dictation, and original stories, oral and written.

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These reinforce one another. Each avenue of expression contributes to clearer seeing. This, in turn, demands and creates more adequate expression. For example, a child can better describe in words that which he has drawn, painted, or made. He enters more fully into the spirit of what he reads after he has "acted it out" in dramatization.

Select for each piece of literature the forms of expression which will best illuminate its meaning. Choose for drawing and painting the word pictures that will be made more vivid by this form of illustration. For constructive expression, see that the "making" suggested has value to the child and to the vivifying of the poem. Of course a narrative poem, not a descriptive poem, best lends itself to dramatization; e.g., we do not attempt to dramatize "Our Old Brown Homestead." But children love to draw and paint the little brown house with the apple boughs reaching out over the roof,—the cherry trees with their branches brushing against the window-panes, and the sweet brier under the window-sill. They love to whittle out the old well curb, and the "rude old sweep" with bucket attached. And for the child, these vitalize the poem. They help him to see a very real home.

Point out and use as models for practice exercises, expressions in story or poem that use cor-

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rectly certain forms often used incorrectly by the pupils. Call attention to the beautiful or the forcible expression, and plan exercises requiring their use by the pupils.

Reinforce the other language values of a piece of literature and economize time and energy by making it a means of practice in writing, spelling, and the use of the "mechanics of written language." Selections copied and written from dictation or memory fix by study and by use the correct forms of the words, many of which will be needed later in the pupil's written composition. This work also helps to fix the habit of using correctly the various marks of punctuation, while fixing in the mind something worthy in both thought and form.

Have stories reproduced occasionally, orally and in writing. Carefully select the stories for this purpose. The special values are cultivation of attention and memory; freedom in expression; growth in power to see relations, to grasp essentials, and to tell connectedly; use of correct forms; and enlargement of vocabulary. Lead even young children to the idea of continuity. Constant emphasis of "What comes next?" with much retelling to tell better in this respect, helps to establish the ideal. This accomplished, there may, later, be class discussion before the reproduction, resulting in the adoption of two or three

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“topics” to be kept in mind. Constantly work toward power to think and tell connectedly. Reproduction may, also, be made a conscious as well as an unconscious means of enlarging the vocabulary. Pupils may sometimes be required to use in their own story-telling, certain specified words and phrases selected from the story told by another.

A fine poem, as has been said before, should never be reproduced or paraphrased. It should be given only with the music and rhythm that are a part of its beauty.

Every month complete the study of one or two poems by having them “learned by heart” and recited. Through the hearing, discussing, illustrating, repetition of lines, copying, dictation, exercises, and the various other uses suggested, the poem is memorized by some children in the class, and partly memorized by all of them. With a little more time and directed effort, each will have committed it to his memory to keep. Learning and reciting a poem by means of this assimilative study is of immeasurably greater value in every respect than the mere learning of words stanza by stanza from book or blackboard. Have frequent individual recitations of poems thus learned. The pupil reciting should stand out before his hearers and look into their faces. He should be trained to stand with well-poised body,



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to pronounce correctly, and to speak distinctly in well-modulated tones.

The series of lessons from story and poem should bear fruit in the children's original stories and simple descriptions, oral and written.

### *Using a piece of literature for self-criticism*

Have the pupils use a piece of literature for self-criticism by comparison. The time and nervous energy spent by teachers in correcting papers is deplorably misspent.

Each must overcome his faults by his own efforts. He must see them himself, and himself feel them as faults before he will put forth this corrective effort. The wrong is seen by its comparison with the right, — the false by its divergence from the true. The habit of comparing his own work, in specific points, with the work of an artist impresses the right and the true forms on eye and ear. Correcting his own mistakes to bring his own work into line with the right he has himself seen, fixes the impression by voice or hand. By this comparison, the child also learns to feel and unconsciously imitate the clearness, beauty, and strength of the good sentence, of unity, coherence, climax, and all other elements of good story-telling long before he knows them by name. As his powers mature, he may be led to criticize his own compositions in each of these

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respects by comparison with a piece of good literature.

This kind of language work keeps pupils growing in appreciation of ideals, while it requires of them daily exercises in self-expression. Both teachers and pupils grow in realization of the truth that "to see something clearly and to tell it in a plain way" is not merely the gift of a genius, but an art to be mastered. And the happy growth of the pupils in reading and language power evidences their advance toward mastery.

### *Three illustrative uses of literature*

#### *(a) In the beginner's first grade*

#### Stevenson's "The Land of Counterpane"

Teacher: "I am going to read to you a poem that I like. I am sure you will like it, too. The words make me see pictures. I can see the pictures with my eyes shut. Listen, and tell me, when I have finished reading the poem, what the lines make you see."

#### THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE<sup>1</sup>

When I was sick and lay a-bed,  
I had two pillows at my head,  
And all my toys beside me lay  
To keep me happy all the day.

<sup>1</sup> From *Poems and Ballads*. Copyright, 1895, 1896, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

## SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

And sometimes for an hour or so  
I watched my leaden soldiers go,  
With different uniforms and drills,  
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills.

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets,  
All up and down among the sheets,  
Or brought my trees and houses out,  
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still  
That sits upon the pillow-hill,  
And sees before him, dale and plain,  
The pleasant Land of Counterpane.

With as little "fuss" about it as possible, get sentences, not fragments, from the children, in conversation. Lead them to begin with "I saw." The responses will be something like this: "I saw a little boy in a white 'nightie' sitting up in bed; and he had two pillows back of him." "I saw tin soldiers with painted coats on." "I saw toys all over the bed." (What toys?) "I saw ships with sails; and green trees; and block houses." (What was the little boy doing?) "The little boy played he was a giant; and that the pillows were a big hill." "He played the bed was land, and that the wrinkles in the clothes were hills; and then he built houses on the land." "Sometimes he played the sheets were water, and he sailed his ships all up and down."

Teacher: "What word in the poem tells that

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he built many houses? Let us write 'city' on the board. What word tells us that he sent many ships together 'all up and down' among the sheets? We will write 'fleet' on the board too. 'A fleet is a number of ships together.'"

During the discussions suggested, the teacher may have read the poem several times, and may have, by request, repeated various lines or stanzas. By this time the children will have caught many of the words of the poems as well as its pictures.

The teacher may re-read the entire poem. Preface with: "When I finish reading this time, tell all the pictures you see; but instead of telling in your own words, repeat the lines in the poem that make you see them." Different lines will be repeated by different pupils. Sometimes the entire poem will be given in this way. Have it recited by individual pupils until the majority of the class have learned it "by heart," and until all have learned a part of it.

Accompany and follow these recitations with conversations and story-telling and simple descriptions based on personal suggestions, e.g.: "Did you ever play the pillows were hills? that the sheets were the ocean? or land? Have you had toys on the bed? What toys? What did you play? Tell about it."

"What toys do you have most fun with? Draw



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three toys that you like to play with. Each may tell how some toy looks, and the rest of us will guess what it is. Tell how large it is, what shape, and what color or colors."

"Do you ever play 'march and drill' with soldiers? Tell about it."

"Do you ever build a city? How? Tell about it."

"Do you ever sail ships? How? Tell about it."

"Do you ever play giant? Brownie? Santa Claus? When you play you are a man or a woman, what do you like best to be? Tell about it."

This entire series of lessons is an excellent basis for script reading lessons, easily suggesting good sentences for reading with feeling,—for word study, for vivifying by drawing, painting, "making," and action.

### *b. In the primary grades*

#### **Longfellow's "The Children's Hour"**

In this poem, the father symbolizes his love by an imaginative play. His children enter at once into the "pretending game" without explanations, because they understand the meaning of what he says. That other children may intelligently play this game with the children of the poem, they must first become familiar with castles,—their outer walls, turrets, dungeons,

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and round-towers; they must think of the "dungeon in the round-tower" as the most secure place in the castle, the place best guarded from the banditti who might scale the walls. Here the castle king might keep his treasures.

To give this needed knowledge and familiarity, the teacher may collect pictures of castles, and tell stories of knighthood, — perhaps Mrs. Harrison's "Story of Cedric"; perhaps Jane Andrews's "Gilbert the Page." See that the unfamiliar words used by the poet are made a part of the children's vocabulary by use in their reproductions of these stories. Say nothing about the poem in this connection. The stories are given at this time for their interpretative value. The children should have the pleasure of involuntarily using the knowledge gained.

The poem needs slight introduction. The thought may be directed to the pleasures of the twilight hour, when fathers are most apt to have time to play with their children. Then, — "I will read you a poem that tells how the poet, Longfellow, used to spend this hour with his three little daughters, Alice, Allegra, and Edith. 'Between the dark and the daylight,' they liked to surprise him in his study. He would pretend they had broken into his castle. Listen, and see the pictures."

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### THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

Between the dark and the daylight,  
When the night is beginning to lower,  
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,  
That is known as the Children's Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me,  
The patter of little feet,  
The sound of a door that is opened,  
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,  
Descending the broad hall stair,  
Grave Alice and laughing Allegra,  
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper and then a silence;  
Yet I know by their merry eyes  
They are plotting and planning together  
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,  
A sudden raid from the hall!  
By three doors left unguarded  
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret  
O'er the arms and back of my chair;  
If I try to escape, they surround me;  
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,  
Their arms about me entwine,  
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen,  
In his Mouse-tower on the Rhine!

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Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,  
Because you have scaled the wall,  
Such an old mustache as I am  
Is not a match for you all !

I have you fast in my fortress,  
And will not let you depart,  
But put you down in the dungeon,  
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,  
Yes, forever and a day,  
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,  
And moulder in dust away !

1. Teacher : "Who has something to tell us about what he saw as I read the poem?"

Accept the responses, clear or obscure, few or many. Have them given in good sentences. Make it a free, happy conversation, not a "stiff" recitation.

2. Teacher : "Listen again as I read a stanza at a time. At the end of each stanza, you may tell me what it is about. Try to tell as much of it as you can in the words of the poem. If any word is strange to you, it will keep you from getting the picture. Ask its meaning."

(Such words may be written on the board to concentrate attention on them while their meaning is discussed.)

3. As a written language exercise, the teacher may write on the board the sentences from the poem that close with the exclamation mark.



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To pupils : "Copy from the board these sentences from 'The Children's Hour.' Be sure to copy the mark at the end of each sentence. What is it called ? What does it tell about the feeling of the writer ?"

4. (Dictation exercise.) The teacher may write the third stanza on the board.

Direction : "Study this carefully to be able to write it from dictation. Tell where each capital letter is used, and why it is used in that place."

5. Teacher : "Listen again to the reading of the whole poem. At the close : (a) draw one of the pictures in the poem. Each may make his own choice. (b) Repeat as many lines of the poem as you can."

Have only individual recitations. One pupil may begin and recite as much of the poem as he remembers ; another may recite from the point where the first one stops, and so on, until there is a patchwork recitation of the whole. Continue until many of the class have memorized the poem. For the few who cannot master it through the ear, it may be presented to the eye. But first let the appeal to the ear have its effect. Continue to have frequent individual recitations of each poem memorized.

6. (Original expression.) Teacher : "Tell what the whole poem makes you think of."

"Tell about romps or plays you have with your

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father, uncle, or big brother, 'between the dark and the daylight';" or, "Tell of a quiet twilight story-telling hour."

"Fathers show their love for their children in many different ways. Tell about them."

"Children have many different ways of showing that they return this love. Tell about them."

### *c. In the grammar grades*

#### **Lanier's "Song of the Chattahoochee"**

(Preparation.) If pupils are not familiar with a mountainous country, collect pictures of mountain streams. As teacher and pupils look at these pictures and talk about them, use words of the poem, as: hurry, run, leap, split, rapid, fall, bed, etc.

The children will be interested in hearing selections from Van Dyke's *Little Rivers*.

Teacher: "To-morrow I will recite for you a beautiful poem about a mountain stream. The writer, Sidney Lanier, is a poet of our own country. He was born in the South, and loved the Southland. The river of his poem, the Chattahoochee, rises in Georgia. It rises in Habersham County, and flows through Hall County, both in northeastern Georgia.

"Before to-morrow, consult your geographies. Make a rough sketch tracing the course of the river 'down the hills of Habersham' and 'through the

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valleys of Hall' County, downward across the plains of Alabama, and on to the Gulf of Mexico. Tell in what foothills this river rises."

The following day, with very little discussion of the preparation (including special emphasis on the journey from the rocky hills, through the valleys, across the plains, to the ocean), the teacher recites, or reads, the entire poem. The first time, listening may be the only requirement. The music of this poem is a fitting accompaniment to the song. Tell the children just to listen to the music and enjoy it. It may be given them more than once for pure enjoyment.

### SONG OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE<sup>1</sup>

Out of the hills of Habersham,  
Down the valleys of Hall,  
I hurry amain to reach the plain,  
Run the rapid and leap the fall,  
Split at the rock and together again,  
Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,  
And flee from folly on every side  
With a lover's pain to attain the plain  
Far from the hills of Habersham,  
Far from the valleys of Hall.

All down the hills of Habersham,  
All through the valleys of Hall,

<sup>1</sup> From Sidney Lanier's *Poems*. Copyright, 1884, 1891, by Mary D. Lanier. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

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The rushes cried, Abide, abide,  
The willful waterweeds held me thrall,  
The laving laurels turned my tide,  
The ferns and the fondling grass said, Stay,  
The dewberry dipped for to work delay,  
And the little reeds sighed, Abide, abide,  
Here in the hills of Habersham,  
Here in the valleys of Hall.

High o'er the hills of Habersham,  
Veiling the valleys of Hall,  
The hickory told me manifold  
Fair tales of shade, the poplar tall  
Wrought me her shadowy self to hold,  
The chestnut, the oak, the walnut, the pine,  
Overleaning, with flickering meaning and sign,  
Said, Pass not, so cold, these manifold  
Deep shades of the hills of Habersham,  
These glades in the valleys of Hall.

And oft in the hills of Habersham,  
And oft in the valleys of Hall,  
The white quartz shone, and the smooth brook-stone  
Did bar me of passage with friendly brawl,  
And many a luminous jewel lone—  
Crystals clear or a-cloud with mist,  
Ruby, garnet, and amethyst, —  
Made lures with the lights of streaming stone  
In the clefts of the hills of Habersham,  
In the beds of the valleys of Hall.

But oh, not the hills of Habersham,  
And oh, not the valleys of Hall  
Avail: I am fain for to water the plain.  
Downward the voices of Duty call —



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Downward, to toil and be mixed with the main,  
The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn,  
And a myriad flowers mortally yearn,  
And the lordly main from beyond the plain  
Calls o'er the hills of Habersham,  
Calls through the valleys of Hall.

After a second or third reading, call for a general discussion of the pictures seen by the pupils. They may also give any opinions, or express any feeling which the poem has suggested.

Teacher : "The more we think about a beautiful poem, the more pleasure and meaning we get from it. Let us look at this one more closely. I will read again the stanza that pictures the rapid running and leaping of the Chattahoochee before it leaves the rocky foothills. Look at this picture : 'I hurry amain.' How would the picture be changed if the word amain were omitted ? What seven words or expressions in this stanza tell what the river does ? — ('hurry amain,' — 'run the rapid,' — 'leap the fall,' — 'split at the rock,' — 'together again,' — 'accept my bed,' — 'flee.') Do you see the stream as it does these things ?"

"What two expressions tell the purpose of it all ?"

"Here, then, we have (1) the beautiful pictures ; (2) their meaning as the poet interprets it."

"In the second stanza, we no longer see the

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leaping, rushing stream. It has come down from the mountains, and is now a quiet, peaceful river rippling along between its green banks. What 'green things growing' on the edge of the stream tried to delay its course? Have you seen them all? What else have you seen growing close to running water? Do these things hold the water back in its course? Observe the words that tell how each tried to delay the stream. What is the meaning of 'held me thrall'? Show how the words 'willful,' 'laving,' and 'fondling' add to the picture and to the feeling of the temptation to stay."

"The next temptation is to linger under the trees that are on the hills and in the glades. (What expression might have been used instead of glades? Would it sound as well here?) What trees are named? Do all these grow where we live? How does the poet picture the hickory as tempting the stream? Does the sun shine very hot on the bare plains of the South? Does this, by contrast, make the shade more desirable? What is the meaning of, — 'the poplar tall wrought me her shadowy self to hold'? What picture do you get from this line, — 'overleaning with flickering meaning and sign'?"

"We next see the river flowing between rocky cliffs. What beautiful stones are hidden away in the clefts of the rocks? in the river bed? What

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words make us hear the stream as well as see it? Is there any special suggestion in the word friendly? What expression of two words in this stanza tells that the stream was affected by this beauty? Explain the meaning of the expression."

"Did the stream yield to any of these 'lures'? The first two lines of the last stanza answer this question. The third line gives the reason. What unusual word in the line means glad? Why is the word in the poem better? The same line tells of the work to be done on the plain. What was it? What word is used instead of ocean? Why better?"

"Point out the lines that are nearly alike in the first and the last stanza. Show that these lines are the key to the great thought of the poem."

"Tell what parts you like best. Give the lines, couplets, or stanzas you have memorized."

"Learn the poem 'by heart' and recite it to the class."

"Make a list of poems that contain vivid word pictures of brooks and rivers." (Discuss them in class.)

"Discuss any poems you know that tell of victory over temptation."

"Tell a story you have read or heard that portrays such victory." (Reproduction.)

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"Tell an original story, true or imaginative, that has the same theme, namely: a story of overcoming the temptation to neglect the work to which duty calls."



## IV

### THE GROUP PLAN OF COÖPERATIVE LESSONS

*Each lesson is an epitome of previous experience*

TO-DAY is the result of all the yesterdays. At any point of time each person's ability to interpret and communicate thought and feeling is the result of many coöperative forces working throughout his entire past. All that each has learned to know through what he has himself seen, heard, thought, and done ; all that he has felt in response to life's experiences and in response to the portrayal of experiences in story, poem, picture, or other form of art ; all that he is to-day, — manifests itself in his own expression. The strength and power of this impulse from within will depend on the clearness and range of knowledge and the consequent depth and genuineness of the feeling. The force with which this expression will take hold of another is conditioned upon mastery of words : of vocabulary, phraseology, and arrangement. And the degree of this mastery is the result of what the ear has heard, what the eye has seen, and what the mouth has spoken during the yesterdays that have fashioned to-day.

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These familiar truths have been repeated to remind us that they are as true of life within the schoolroom as without. Each lesson in school is but an epitome of some life lesson. Every conscious attempt to express himself in oral or written composition should be felt by the pupil to be the result of a series of coöperative lessons all helping him to communicate his thought through this composition. And this expression of himself measures the development of this language power at any given time.

### *The literary selection as the basis of a group of coöperative lessons*

Right here we have touched the primary cause of weak results in teaching literature and language by many and many a faithful teacher, — namely, failure to unify the lessons and the energies of teachers and pupils because of weak grasp or no grasp of a central purpose. Without this, each lesson is an isolated unit when it should be one of a group of coöperative units. Careful observation of the schoolroom work of those who are, to some extent, using literature as a basis of language lessons will show that most use a literary selection as a more or less distinct unit; and teach a series of language lessons as so many distinct, unrelated units. This is to disregard the law of interrelations of thought and of mental

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energies. It makes slight use of the laws to which we have referred in the preceding paragraph. Especially does it ignore the cumulative force of concentrated energy.

The literary selection should be not merely the basis of one language lesson, nor of a series of unrelated lessons, but the basis of a group of co-operative lessons, tied together by the theme of the selection.

### *a. First step : selecting an interesting theme*

The first step is the selection of a theme that touches the interests of the pupils. This marvelous "human touch," this kinship of human interests, this every-day proclamation of universal brotherhood, — does not the thought of these everlasting foundations lift language teaching above drudgery into privilege? It is with the keen delight of the artist that a teacher interprets the kindling eye and eager tongue which show that the right note has been struck.

The next pleasure is the search for pictures and literature that will bring to the pupils that portrayal of these interests which will be a "dress rehearsal of their own experiences," — such portrayal as will give new dignity to the experiences recalled, and impress higher ideals of forms of expression.

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### *b. Second step: using the literary embodiment of the theme*

Then follows the still greater delight of so using the pictures and the literature selected as to strike not merely the right note but the full chord. As has been said, the literature is, for this purpose, best presented to the ear, that the minds of the pupils may be given entirely to gazing, not glancing, at the mental pictures brought into view on the brain film in response to the words of an artist. For each individual this means a series of pictures out of his own life, the making of which frees the motive force that sets a-throbbing with desire for action the various media through which he expresses himself to others. Each is happy to draw or paint or tell in oral or written word what he sees and what it makes him think about.

This spontaneous picturing and telling gives the teacher the key to the whole group of language exercises. The generated interest made cumulative by expression is used in the production of the tangible practical results of more accurate, more adequate, and more effective use of the English language.

Literary embodiments of the theme remain the ideal of the coöperative group, — the ideal to be familiarized by continued and varied contact.



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The interest roused remains the dominant force of the dictation exercises for spelling, paragraphing, and punctuation; of the word-study for development of vocabulary; of the conversations for use of the larger vocabulary with correct pronunciation and for correct use of grammatical forms; of the study of paragraph-making; of recitation of poems "learned by heart"; of dramatization; and of all other language exercises that make up the lesson units of the group. The last of the series, "the last for which the first was planned," are the oral and the written composition, the fruit of each individual's response to the ideals studied, and his personal effort to reach them.

The pupil should realize that something of what he has learned in his out-of-door life, in his lessons in nature study, geography, history, or any other content study, or something that has come to him through his relations with other lives at home or at school, has furnished him with something to say. And he may early realize that through "exposure" to what has been "finely said" by another he catches not only inspiration to try to tell what he has himself seen and felt, but with it he catches a wider vocabulary, a finer phraseology, and more definite ideas of arranging his own thoughts. Through his own efforts to tell well, he may be led to feel his need

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of exercises for practice in the use of oral and written forms in order that he may gain skill in handling his material.

A composition is, then, the natural climax of a group of coöperative lessons, which group includes a piece of literature to bring into direct focus both phases of the language ideal, — (1) the thought and feeling to be quickened, and (2) the forms to be first appreciated, then used creatively.

### *c. Third step: criticizing the prevailing faults*

The composition should be followed by class criticism of certain prevailing faults, for the stated purpose of "doing better next time." And the pupils are led to turn to the literature that furnishes the theme for their standards of comparison. The teacher impersonally presents the wrong selected from the compositions and points to the right in the literature or in impromptu renderings that give the correct usage. Each pupil is led to criticize his own composition in respect to the fault under consideration, by comparison with the true, noting the faults or excellencies as measured by the standard presented.

And here only the teacher can mark out the path. The ideal of the textbook in language is to inspire, stimulate, develop, and guide both the

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interests and the activities of the teacher and the pupils. The teacher is the live factor in all live teaching ; and especially and most emphatically is this true of all live language teaching, in which material is used to develop the self to be expressed and the adequacy of its expression. The teacher alone knows the special conditions of home and school life and environment which must guide in adapting and supplementing all material to meet these conditions.

There follow groups of lessons illustrating the plan outlined, the group plan of coöperative lesson units, suggested and unified by the right use of the rightly selected piece of literature. Such a plan is built on principles as eternal as human life. Among them are the laws of conservation of energy and interrelation of forces, — laws as operative in the mental as in the material world. But the teacher's insight, sympathy, knowledge, understanding, and creative ability so to use material as to minister to larger life and more effective service are elements of the wise love that is the fulfilling of the law.

### *Illustrative group of coöperative lessons*

#### *a. Nature themes*

Suppose the theme of the composition is to be some pleasant out-of-door autumn experience. Study and discussion of Murillo's picture, "The

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Melon Eaters," or of Seefert's "The Harvesters' Return" will suggest some autumn pleasures. In such word pictures as those of Spenser and Whittier the pupils catch the true spirit of the season. These poets are great enough to see as children see. They show us Autumn personified, laden with fruit and grains, crowned with the harvest sheaves and "laughing out" with joy in his rich gifts. (In comparison with this happy autumn mood thus caught and given back to us, note the morbidness from the child's point of view of a poem like Bryant's "The Death of the Flowers.") To these pictures, add Charles Dudley Warner's whimsical account of the boys' nut-gathering on a New England farm. Let the pupils listen to lines from James Whitcomb Riley's gleeful autumn songs, closing with his suggestions of the great autumn home festival. Surely in the mind of every normal child some half-forgotten, half-appreciated good time in this great harvest season of the year has been re-vivified and clearly outlined by association with the vivid pictures seen through the words of others. Surely every pupil now feels that he has something of interest to tell.

In the manner of the telling, each composition will evidence to a greater or less degree the influence of the literature discussed. To this are added specific exercises for the use of certain



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correct forms of speech and writing to be used in expressing thoughts related to the composition theme. For example, in this group there may be much oral repetition of statements regarding fruits, each sentence to embody the correct use of the word *seen* with an auxiliary. The dictation spelling lesson, while contributing to the thought of the theme, may also emphasize the use of the capital and period in sentence-making.

Such a group of lessons is a definite preparation for as many individual compositions as there are members in the class. Each will relate an individual autumn experience in berrying, nutting, haying, harvesting, or some other kind of fruit gathering.

For a series of such groups the following stories and poems may well illuminate the themes: The old Greek story of "Ceres and Proserpina"; the "Feast of Mondamin" from "Hiawatha"; the poems "October" and "Down to Sleep," by Helen Hunt Jackson; "Harvest Home in England"; "The First Thanksgiving in America." As previously illustrated, each group of the series will have its specific formal exercises for definite practice in the oral use of certain correct forms of speech, and the use in writing of certain marks of punctuation; and each such exercise will make a definite contribution both in thought and form

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to the writing of the composition. And this composition, with the exercises in class criticism of what has been written, make the climax of the group. And here we have the self-expression that manifests the degree of language power each has attained as the result of the coöperation of all previous impressions and efforts. On the language side, it is the resultant of vital contact with the ideals and practice in striving to reach them.

### *b. Historical themes*

Again, the first preparation for many compositions is made in the history lessons. For instance, the pupil has read and discussed some of the famous explorations, legendary and historical,—among them those of Columbus. He learns Joaquin Miller's "Columbus," and catches the indomitable spirit of the great man who did ever cry, "Sail on, sail on, sail on and on!" while his men grew mutinous, "grew ghastly wan and weak," while fierce winds blew and nights were dark and the "mad sea showed its teeth." Copying the poem not only helps to fix it in memory, but also helps to interpret and to establish in habit the correct use of exclamation marks, and of quotation marks. Writing from dictation a quoted paragraph of vivid and forcible description of Sir Francis Drake, "the first man to

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carry the English flag into the Pacific," may be used to show how to describe a person. It will also enlarge the vocabulary of descriptive adjectives needed to picture a man of the pioneer type. This group may well include a lesson requiring the correct use of forms of eight or ten verbs used in the poem "Columbus." These lessons cannot fail to help the pupil to give oral and written accounts of other explorers, explorations, and discoveries ; they will help him to write paragraphs giving his mental pictures of legendary and historical persons.

### *c. Geographical themes*

Let us consider the value of geography lessons in laying the foundation of a series of language lessons. Let us assume that the boys and girls have studied several rivers : have traced their courses ; have noted the explorations and settlements following these river paths ; have noted the different ways in which streams are useful to man. Perhaps they have associated certain rivers with the thoughts or the homes of poets and prose-writers. Note the language values of the following lessons.

Find as many stories and poems as you can about springs, brooks, rivulets, and rivers. Each pupil may select a poem to read aloud, or a story to tell to the class. Select pictures to illustrate

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the stories and poems. (Perhaps the teacher reads to the class from Henry van Dyke's *Little Rivers*.)

Give an account of the early explorations of the Hudson; of the Mississippi; of the Columbia; of a river in your own part of the country.

Tell a story connected with a brook or river; — perhaps a legend of the Hudson; or of the Mississippi; or a story of one of the early settlements on the St. Lawrence.

Tell about the home of Hawthorne or Emerson on the Concord River; or of John Burroughs or Washington Irving on the Hudson; or of Longfellow, Lowell, or Holmes on the river Charles.

Learn by heart Sidney Lanier's "Song of the Chattahoochee." "Learning by heart" implies (1) vivid seeing of the poet's pictures through (2) sympathetic entering into the feeling of the poet; and (3) fixing the pictures in memory in the exact words of the writer. To write this poem correctly from memory requires a certain mastery in the use of quotation marks and of the comma. Study of the word pictures increases appreciation of the figurative use of words that marks the poetic touch; it makes for keener discrimination of word values; it quickens the response to the music of sound and rhythm.

An oral exercise of this group for correct use



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of word forms would naturally deal with different forms of such verbs as *run*, *flow*, *rise* and *raise*.

Composition subjects for individual expression (not reproductive) may be suggested as follows:—

Give an account of a fishing trip ; a canoe trip ; a picnic by a river ; or tell about a camping experience.

Imagine that you have made a small sailboat ; that you name it and set it afloat on the stream nearest your home ; that while it is on its way to the sea a storm rises. Write some of the adventures of your imaginary boat.

Write a letter to a friend to describe an imaginary trip on a river. Tell what you see along the river's banks ; and in the last paragraph tell of its greatest values to the people living near it.

### *d. Mythological themes*

The King Arthur stories furnish themes for groups of lessons of great interest and value to boys and girls of all grades ; but they make special appeal to the often latent chivalry of boys in the self-conscious, undemonstrative period of their lives. These stories afford the best possible means of developing self-control, courage, protection of the weak and wronged, and care for the suffering, while as the basis of language lessons they develop language power.

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The stories of the Knights of the Round Table read both in class and at home will generate most interesting class reproductions and discussions. The children will listen with keenest delight to Tennyson's pictures of knighthood as set to musical sound in his "Idylls of the King." Excellent dictation lessons may be selected from this poem and from Sir Thomas Malory, or from Lanier's "The Boy's King Arthur." The class may learn by heart and write from memory the oath of knighthood: "I will be faithful to God and loyal to the King. I will reverence all women. I will ever protect the pure and helpless. I will never engage in unholy wars. I will never seek to exalt myself to the injury of others. I will speak the truth and deal justly with all men." Study of the use of "I will" in this oath of knighthood is an excellent preparation for a series of studies in the use of "shall" and "will."

An exercise for discriminating use of such descriptive words as will be needed in writing the compositions of this group is illustrated below:—

Copy the words in the following lists, and write after each a word of opposite meaning.

In class, give sentences using the words in the given lists to describe some character in story, poem, or real life. Discuss and compare the words of opposite meaning.

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fearless	daring	pure	noble
unselfish	heroic	courageous	brave
chivalrous	manly	stout-hearted	valiant
strong	courteous	gentle	high-spirited
gallant	truthful	just	adventurous
kind	true	honorable	

Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal" should at this time deepen the children's vision of the beauty and real significance of knighthood. (This is to recommend not an intensive study of the poem at this time but a sympathetic appreciation of its pictures and their meaning.)

Suggested themes for composition writing:—

Write a story of any of King Arthur's knights. (Be sure that your opening sentences tell the time, the place, and the most important person or persons of the story.)

Write a paragraph about "The Search for the Holy Grail."

Write a story of a boy or a girl who wanted to do great things and neglected to do the duties that lay nearest. (In your story, show that the boy or girl learns the same lesson that Sir Launfal learned.)

Write a true story of a deed of some man or woman, which deed shows the true spirit of knighthood.

Write an account, true or imagined, of the knightly deed of a boy. Perhaps he rescued an

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abused animal; perhaps he was kind to an aged man or woman who needed his help; perhaps he befriended a child weaker than himself.

Similarly, the story of Ulysses, of Siegfried, and of Beowulf may be used to unify groups of coöperative lesson units. And every sane boy revels in Mabie's "Norse Stories." The charm is heightened by associating the stories with such word-pictures as are found in Longfellow's "Saga of King Olaf" and Lowell's "Reply to the Challenge of Thor." (These should be read aloud to the class.) In this connection, Henry van Dyke's story of "The Oak of Geismar" from "The First Christmas Tree" is also greatly appreciated. Collections of pictures showing mythological conceptions of artists add to the interest. Intelligent discussion of pictures has great culture value on the side of language as well as of art appreciation.

### *Three important suggestions*

It is an established fact that pupils read more intelligently and sympathetically and express themselves not only more correctly but also more adequately as their teachers grow in the understanding of the threefold truth: (1) that reading and language lessons, though often separately indicated on the school program, are truly parts of one whole; (2) that reading in school means the reading of literature; (3) that study of liter-



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ature furnishes the inspiration and models for the language study.

In the best schools, the application of these truths in the primary grades has become a matter of practice. On entering school, children clasp hands with Eugene Field, Robert Louis Stevenson, and other poets of childhood. They live with *Hiawatha*. The classic fables, fairy stories, and folklore, with the poems that appeal to child-life, not only "tie together" the exercises in telling, in reading, and in drawing with the songs, games, and handwork, but they also nourish each child's growing life and fill his mind with vivid pictures of something worth seeing and sharing. It must be remembered that the child's language power grows with himself and he with it. To stand out before a class, look into the eyes of the listeners, and with freedom from self-consciousness to reproduce a story or recite a poem learned by heart means development of reading ability and of language power. But the final telling a story of his own experience or imagination (suggested and molded by the familiar stories and poems) is the individual oral composition that is self-expression.

Walt Whitman has given us some lines in which he has written large the psychology of the impression half of the impression-expression circuit : —

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"There was a boy went forth every day  
And the first object he saw that object he became;

Or that object became a part of him  
For that day or for a certain part of the day;

Or for years or stretching cycles of years  
The early lilacs became a part of him."

A part of the psychology of the expression half of the circuit is found in the words, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." To this must be added the truth that the manner of speaking is fashioned by conscious and unconscious imitation of language ideals.

We may be pardoned for wresting to our use Emerson's injunction "Hitch your wagon to a star." Mastery of the language art is the star to which are hitched the wagons of all the language lessons. "Pulling singly" will mark time; "pulling together" will mark progress.

## V

### TRAINING TO HABITUAL USE OF CORRECT FORMS

#### *The need of skill in using the medium of communication*

IN any discussion of any phase of language teaching, we shall remember that the high purpose of this teaching is to develop each pupil's power to communicate his thought and feeling. We shall not forget that, in every art, the first essential is something within the self to be expressed ; that, in every art, "there's all the difference in the world between having something to say and having to say something." But "to have something to say" is the first, not the only, essential. To say it so truly, so clearly, so forcibly that it shall take hold of another mind is the second requisite ; and ability to do this depends upon the degree of mastery of technique, — of skill in using the medium of communication.

This twofold law applies with special emphasis to the one great universal art of self-expression in words. Here is the medium that all, — rich, poor, high, low, white, black, yellow, or brown, —

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all must use in finding fellowship. In all community-life, — in every land and in every age, — asking for bread or for friendship, working or playing, sharing sorrows or joys, — every human being enters into life relations by means of words. Words are the universal symbols of coöperation, of sympathy, of brotherhood. Inevitably, when one's thought reaches out to find lodgment in the mind of another, it takes shape in a group of words. Whether it shall "fall by the wayside" or "spring up in good ground" and bear fruit depends in large measure on the adequacy of its word expression. This is the body of the thought through which its soul is manifested or obscured. And, in the words of Colonel Parker, "while form without thought is barren, thought without form is mushy." Neither "mushy" nor uncouth language can carry "the live coal that kindles."

While, therefore, it remains eternally true that the first step in the development of language power is to rouse clear thought with its accompanying feeling, — it also remains eternally true that to develop this power is to give increased mastery of vocabulary, of phraseology, of accepted and universally understood grammatical forms. In previous chapters we have discussed the first great essential; in this chapter we shall discuss the form-mastery phase of language growth.



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*Mastery of form implies habitual use of  
speech forms*

Mastery of form implies the habitual use of "the true, the beautiful, and the good"; habit is the result of repeated use; and the speech forms used by each individual are those his ear has furnished him. Let us say this backward as well as forward; it embodies our theme. Through the ear, we get our words and phrases, we "catch" our ways of saying things; by use in unconscious and conscious imitation we make these our own; by repeated use we fix them in habit.

The fact that each person adds to his language stock and molds its form by silent reading does not gainsay the statement that his ear furnishes his speech. Is it not true that one incorporates into his own language the word expressions he reads only when he mentally hears the words he sees? A bright educational lecturer has said that "from ear to mouth is the short circuit." In silent reading the "circuit" is from eye and ear to mouth, the connection between the first two being a lightning flash.

We quote further: "From ear through arm to mouth is the long, indirect circuit." We need this reminder of Nature's plans. To attempt to establish habitual use of correct speech forms by correction of errors on paper is not only the

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"long circuit" waste of energy and time; it is as futile as the child's attempt to check the incoming tide with his toy spade. To the pupil it becomes a tiresome, mechanical task, without initiative on his part, to continue to "correct" on paper the mistakes he "knew better" than to make, but which "wrote themselves" out of his daily speech. Errors "at home" in one's oral language invariably make themselves "at home" in his written language. Whenever the mind is occupied with the thought to be expressed, the pen is sure to record the habits of the tongue. Experience has always taught this.

By the study of physiological psychology, we discover that the human body bears testimony to these facts of experience. Nature has written large and written deep in spinal cord and brain the certain reaction of the out-going motor impulse to complete the impression of the incoming sound waves, as well as to complete the ideas these sounds bring in to the mind. With equal plainness, Nature records the tendency to repeat a motor activity until its path is cut so deep that the spinal cord finally attends to the act and leaves the brain to the service of higher mental activities. Not until the word forms accepted and adopted by speakers and writers of the best English are taken care of by the spinal cord, are they habitually used. It is his motor habits that

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"set" the language of each person in its own individual mold.

So to him who would master the technique of word expression both science and experience plainly say: Put yourself where you will hear the right; say it; say it again and again and again. Listen to it until it "sounds right" and natural; until the needle of the ear compass swings ever true to the correct sound and is sensitive to the incorrect. Then say it until the motor reaction is so automatic that the right form says itself while the mind is engaged with its thought content.

### *Good English is born of familiarity*

It is evident that the use of good English is born of familiarity. From the first day of school to the last, every pupil should be daily "exposed" to the literature that belongs to him at any given stage of his growth, because the literature rightfully his exerts the highest and strongest influence in both the thought and the form-phases of his language development. This daily contact would insure the pupil's habitual use of correct and adequate forms of expression if, in addition, he heard only good language at home, at school, and at play. To come daily into one's inheritance of the best that has been thought and done and said, and to live in daily close association with

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those who have something to say and "say it finely," and with no other, would be to gain constantly increasing power over the word, the sentence, and the paragraph as media of expression. Under these conditions, language teaching would be relieved of what some teachers have called its drudgery side.

### *Special obstacles necessitate definite habit-forming exercises*

But a few unpleasant facts get in the way of this happy issue out of our language difficulties. At seven years of age, each child has passed through his nascent language-making years. He has passed through the period of keenest response to sound, — the period when impulse to motor imitation holds well-nigh absolute sway. And during these language-making years, vast numbers of children in America never hear any good English ; still greater numbers never hear the best. We face conditions peculiar to our own country ; we must meet them as they are.

In thousands of homes a foreign language is spoken ; in hundreds of thousands, a sort of home-made combination of English with one or two other tongues ; in thousands upon thousands of homes most flagrant violations of all laws of form are heard. And, in addition to the positively wrong to which they have been subjected, the



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great majority of American children have heard only a meager, commonplace, if not coarse, vocabulary. In fact, it is the rare home and the rare schoolroom in which one habitually hears true, virile English. Even from parents and teachers whose college diplomas certify that they are highly educated, one often hears the discordant note, the result of early habits combined with weak or spasmodic or no effort to overcome them. From the same cause it is not unusual to hear even from the university chair and the public platform the insidious, slovenly inaccuracies of speech that have crept in and have become domesticated.

Consideration of these influences and the inevitableness of their results may help us to understand why our children come to the school with so much language equipment to get, and so much to get rid of. It shows us why training to skill in the use of correct forms is a matter of overcoming bad habits by establishing the good in their place; and why, in the schoolroom, contact with the best must be supplemented by definite habit-forming exercises.

*The habit of correct usage should be an  
increasingly intelligent usage*

To do this part of the work well requires thorough, accurate, systematized knowledge of the

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use of forms ; it also requires careful planning to give the pupils the systematic practice needed. Nothing but persistent oral repetition of the correct form will overcome the habit of using incorrect, ungrammatical, and inelegant expressions in daily speech. These are matters of ear training and of motor habits, as well as of knowledge. As long as errors persist in a person's speech, they will persist in what he writes when full of his subject. The cure for such faults, then, whether of speech or writing, is in oral repetition. Exercises for this purpose should be conversational; the more of a game element in them, the better ; they may, at times, be somewhat gymnastic in their nature. They should be short, lively, and practiced daily.

But this habit of correct usage should be an increasingly intelligent usage. The following general plan for the daily practice exercises is recommended as sound in principle and serviceable in practice: (1) provide for exercises that require correct use of a form commonly misused; (2) call attention to the form used and the manner of using ; (3) secure repetition of the correct form; (4) ask pupils to tell what form has been used and how it was used; (5) lead to a simple statement of a direction for its use; (6) require further repetition to fix habit. This plan may be followed in the study of written forms in the

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dictation of exercises as well as with the oral exercises.

### *The futility of reliance on rules of grammar*

Much past teaching has been based on the theory that rules of grammar would do the work. Pupils have glibly recited the rules of syntax from I to L, and fifty times a day have broken the fifty rules. And the teacher — has wondered why! Rules of grammar do not fashion speech; they record its crystallization. They never establish habits of correct usage; they may serve to make that usage more intelligent and self-directive. They throw light on the path of effort, but it is the effort, the determined effort and the repeated effort that conquers. Knowledge of the rule would be sufficient "if to do were as easy as to know what 't were good to do." When the child said, "Can I have a piece of pie?" "May I!" corrected the mother. Then the child said, "May I have a piece of pie?" and the mother answered, "Yes, you can." The knowing mind said "may"; the spinal cord said "can"; therefore the tongue said "can."

### *The restoration of an old-fashioned treatment of language teaching*

Doctors do not disagree with this diagnosis of conditions. Is there, then, a prescription for the

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remedy? If so, are the results guaranteed? As form study more readily than content study lends itself to prescriptions, a plan is outlined which has the following recommendations: (1) It is built upon the facts and principles set forth in this paper; (2) its value has been proved in the practical experience of the most successful teachers of language in all countries; (3) it has been in use for many years. It bears no original stamp, — is no patent process. It is an old-fashioned feature of language teaching that, like the good old orthodox multiplication table, has been lost out of some schools. There will be more effective economy of time and energy when these and some other lost articles of form study are found and restored to their proper places as involving necessary practice for automatic mastery of means and tools.

### *Eight practical suggestions*

The following practical suggestions are written in the second person for the sake of directness; they are not written in dogmatic mood.

*First.* Make a list of the errors of speech common among your pupils and in the school neighborhood. Keep this list in mind throughout the year. Add to it as an epidemic error appears.

It is significant that in a collection of several



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hundred such lists made by teachers of all sorts and conditions of children in various localities and under widely varying circumstances, the universality of certain groups of errors is strikingly shown. With the elimination of a few localisms, any one of the lists would be a good working basis for all, to be supplemented in each school by the few localisms of its neighborhood.

All note among common errors in the use of tense, person, and number forms of verbs, — the forms of *see, go, come, become, do, write, run, lie, lay, sit, set, sing, ring, bring, buy, begin, know, grow, throw, blow, fall, fly, take, speak, break, teach, think, catch, fight, rise, raise, freeze, eat, bite, drink, drive, ride, and be.*

All note common use of the incorrect for the correct personal pronoun forms : —

(1) in the predicate in such expressions as "It is I" ;

(2) after certain prepositions in such expressions as "Between you and me (him, her)" ;

(3) after "than" in such sentences as "He is older than I."

And nearly all lists record the frequent incorrect use of *this, that, these, those, them ; each, every, few, fewer, little, less ; many, much, most, almost ; some, somewhat, real, rather, very ; better, best, worse, worst ; good, well, bad, badly ; without, unless ; between, among ; in, into ; at, to ;*



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*no, none ; either, or ; neither, nor ; like, as ; who, whom ; may, can ; will and shall.*

*Second.* Plan a systematic series of daily oral exercises, each to have the particular purpose of overcoming a particular fault noted on your list. Plan it thoughtfully and follow it persistently.

*Third.* Inspire the pupils with a desire to speak correctly, and lead them to feel that these exercises will help them to do so, just as daily practice helps them to play good baseball or football.

When quite young, the writer learned this lesson experimentally. Her teacher was a man, now known, respected, and loved throughout the educational world. In his grammar class, she easily carried the 100% banner in parsing, analysis, and recitation of rules. As fast as "the waters come down at Lodore" she could pour out the words of the rule for the use of the predicate-nominative, and the nominative forms of the personal pronouns. But alas! the same tongue was ready to say in the same breath, "It was me that said that rule." "It was me (him, her)" had already made the "short circuit" and beaten the path.

The wise teacher said to her, "Will you for one week say 'It is I,' many, many times every day? Will you keep repeating it as many times as you can say it in a minute and make as many

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of these minute opportunities as you can every day for a week?"

"I will," she said, "but I don't think I shall ever say it to or before anybody. 'It is I' sounds to me like 'putting on airs.'"

"Never mind that now; just do as I ask," was the reply.

The consequences were: (1) "It is I" no longer sounded affected; (2) "It is me" became intolerable to the ear, and impossible to the tongue. She was cured. And since that time she has used this formula and cured herself of many a tendency to use a doubtful or an incorrect form.

To convince pupils that we ourselves use the remedy we prescribe often inspires them to greater zeal, faith, and effort.

*Fourth.* Make the exercise short (three to five minutes) and lively.

*Fifth.* Make it the main purpose of this daily exercise to have every pupil individually use as many times as possible the correct form chosen for the day's practice.

*Sixth.* Require sensible sentences, with some "point" to them. Introducing the game element helps give the "point."

Suppose, for example, the teacher or a pupil has recited to a primary class from Stevenson's "Foreign Lands,"

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"Up into the cherry tree  
Who should climb but little me?  
I held the trunk with both my hands  
And looked abroad on foreign lands.

"I saw the next door garden lie  
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,  
And many pleasant places more  
That I had never seen before.

"I saw the climbing river pass  
And be the ship's blue looking glass,  
The dusty roads go up and down  
With people tramping in to town.

"If I could find a higher tree  
Farther and farther I should see, —"

. . . . .

(Teacher to children);

"'Play' you found that higher tree out in the school yard or on a high hill; you climbed to its top and looked above, below, and away, — as far as you could see. Now you have come back to tell us what you saw. Just as fast as you can talk, one after the other may tell what he saw. Each may begin with 'I saw.'"

Then, "Each may tell of 'pleasant places' that he had never seen before." ("I saw — that I had never seen before.")

Again, "Each in this row may tell what the pupil across the aisle (or at right or left) saw or has seen." ("Frank saw [has seen] —.")

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"Each may tell what he has seen from the top of a hill." ("From the top of — I have seen —.")

"In each alternate row pupils may try to remember what those in the opposite row have seen, and tell the school." ("They have seen a river, fields, hills, houses, children, etc.")

All of the so-called sense-training games in the primary school should be language-training games; and similar exercises adapted to older children should be continued throughout the grades. The possible devices are innumerable.

*Seventh.* After their repeated use, in sensible sentences, call attention to the forms used and the manner of using. Simple rules may be made by the pupils.

For example, after repeated use of two verb-forms like *saw*, *seen*, — *went*, *gone*, — or *came*, *come*, — the pupils may be led to note the differences in the use of these forms. The teacher may ask, which is used with *has* or *have*? Which, without? The children may frame a very simple direction: as, "Of the two words *saw* and *seen*, use *seen*, and not *saw*, with *has* or *have*." Older pupils that have acquired a grammar vocabulary will perhaps make this rule: "Use *seen* with *has*, *have*, or *had* to form a verb-phrase. Use *saw* without a helping verb to denote past time."

But it must be kept in mind, as has been said,



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that while this formulated statement may help to more definite purpose, to more self-directive effort, it is the repeated hearing and using that establishes the habit.

*Eighth.* Vary the exercises as much as possible within the limit of the general plan. Have the pupils frequently read aloud sentences containing the desired correct forms. These sentences may be read sometimes from books, sometimes from the board. Chronic cases may be asked to read rapidly the same five or six sentences for several days; perhaps more than once a day. Under right school conditions, it takes but a part of a minute. Sometimes one pupil may read the selected sentences, and another listen and repeat from memory. The resourceful teacher will have many devices for "keeping up steam" to keep the machinery moving. Pupils often suggest excellent exercises for variety.

### *The problem of technical grammar*

To what extent shall technical grammar be called to our aid in teaching language?

In the primary grades the child is entirely engaged with the art, the using. There should be no thought of forcing upon him even the terms of the science. As his power increases and his study of language naturally and gradually deepens, he begins to appreciate a sentence as a

## HABITUAL USE OF CORRECT FORMS

thought unit; he advances to the study of the larger elements of this thought unit; and by the time he reaches the fifth or sixth grade he is ready to use intelligently the terms "subject" and "predicate." Similarly, his study of words is gradually giving him greater understanding of their various uses, and he begins to group them according to their uses in the sentence. When he understands that for which a term stands, he should use the term as naturally as he names the parts of a flower when he is familiar with those parts as special organs of the flower. There seems to be no halfway place for the home-made, make-shift word to be used as a substitute for the accepted term. For example, when the pupil has grouped the words used "to name," why belittle him by giving him a made-up word, while we reserve the word "noun" for the next grade? By the end of the fifth or the sixth grade, he should have grown to use intelligently the names of the parts of speech, as he uses any other words that have grown into his vocabulary in the natural way, — by use as needed to express ideas.

But these terms are not taught as elements of the science, the logic, of grammar. They have, rather, as his thinking and knowledge grew, been given to supply a needed, exact vocabulary. By means of its use he can much more clearly, simply, and directly state the principal rules and

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directions governing the use of language forms ; and here, as everywhere else, clearer expression helps to clear the thought. Though the foundation is thus laid for the study of grammar, it is not at this time for the sake of grammar ; it is for the sake of its contribution to language power.

When, by this gradual growth, — in thought, in vocabulary, and in appreciation of some of the underlying principles, — the time arrives for systematic study of the structure of the language the study of English naturally divides into two lines : grammar, which is followed by the study of logic and other related subjects ; and literature and composition, which are to be a lifelong study and delight. But the analysis of thought required by an understanding of grammar as an organized body of principles is difficult for the immature and untrained mind. This branch of study should under no circumstances be attempted before the seventh grade ; and, in the grades, only the essential elements of the science can be studied with profit.

## VI

### THE USE OF TEXTBOOKS

#### *The functions of teacher and text*

A SYSTEMATIC, progressive course in English, from the kindergarten to and through the high school course, evidently demands the careful selection, collection, preparation, and arrangement of material, and the careful planning of exercises, that involve years of study and of time. It implies a series of textbooks embodying the results of these years of experience. But with the best available series of books, much which only he can do remains to be done by each individual teacher. The books should suggest, inspire, give practical help, supply much material, and provide a consistently progressive plan of work; but there always remains as the essential, the teacher's individual initiative and personal ability.

#### *Oral teaching in the first three grades*

Experience in all grades, both with and without textbooks, has led to certain definite opinions regarding the use of textbooks by the pupils. It seems clear that during the first three years of school life the teacher is the best medium for



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presenting what is to be taught. Here, then, the teaching should be largely oral, and a formal textbook in the hands of the pupil may do more harm than good. The reading books should furnish much good material, and this may be supplemented by the use of pictures, blackboard, and chart.

### *The need of a text in intermediate and higher grades*

But in the intermediate and higher grades, assuming that the teachers have the requisite knowledge and experience, they have not the time to get and prepare the larger amount of material required; nor should it be necessary for them to write so many lessons on the blackboard. Moreover, much of the best material is not at hand. Again, the pupil who has entered the fourth grade has reached the age when he should think from the printed page; when he should be held responsible for different lessons, to be thought out by and of himself. It is especially important in this study that he absorb much by reading and re-reading to himself. It is the almost universal experience that when language work is attempted beyond the third or the fourth grade without books in the hands of the children, it tends to degenerate into a series of unrelated and more or less mechanical exercises.

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